A REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

Tuesday, November 18. 1707.

IT was something Novel, when I told you in the last Paper, that in the Affair of present our Misfortunes, I would send the People of this Age to the *French* King for Instruction, and why not send *English* Men to the *French* to learn, as well as *Solomon* sent the Sluggard to the Ant?

And what must we learn of the *French* now? Says One that scorns to imitate his Neighbours, tho' it be to his Advantage: I'll tell you, Gentlemen, learn two things of them.

1. When ye have lost a Battle, as at *Ramellies*, and find the Enemy pressing you hard, and Victory going over like a Revolter to your Enemies, the Field lost, and the Sea at their Command, the Enemy preparing to invade you, and your own Strength very much lessen'd, and unable to contend. What did the *French* King do? I'll tell you what he did; He publish'd a General Fast, a Day of Humiliation and Deprecation, a Day to mortifie themselves, and humbly implore the Divine Mercy and Assistance; a Day to confess their Sins, and turn away from them *a-la-mode de Nineveh*; if peradventure, *the Lord might turn from his fierce Anger, that they perish not*—— Well, this was their Way, and what was the Consequence, what in it is encouraging to do the same again—Truly, I gave you an Account of that once already, and I am sorry to repeat it—

On that very Day, mark it, *that very Day*, GOD sent a contrary Wind, which lock'd up our Fleet, and detain'd our Army, that was then design'd to insult them, and which they were in no Condition to oppose; and this contrary Wind continued so long, so unusually, so astonishingly long, that for nigh four Months they were effectually stop'd, and suffering all the Inconveniences of an Army lying long on Board the close Ships, incommoded and unhealthy, we lost our Men, our Horses, our Money, spent our Provisions, *&c.* and were at last oblig'd to lay aside the Grand Design, and send that Army another way; whereas, if they were follow'd with the same Hand that first

first fought againſt them, they fell into the Enemies Power, and were almoſt all of them cut in pieces at *Almanza*— It was on that very Day of the general Humiliation in *France*, that the Wind drove back the Fleet into *Torbay*.

And from that very Day, *I will not attempt to ſay for what Glorious Ends*, perhaps for their greater Fall, it has pleas'd GOD to reſtore the Affairs, and raiſe the Hopes of the *French* in a Manner next to miraculous, and to follow us with a Train of Diſaſters; which tho' they ſhould not diſcourage us, ſhould prompt us to conſider, and look back both upon the Ways of Providence and upon our own. But

2. To go on with the Affairs of *France*; Among all his Succeſſes this Summer, and the reviving to his Affairs, yet it has pleas'd Heaven alſo to touch him with his immediate Finger in one ſenſible Part, *Viz.* by an unuſual and ſurprizing Flood of mighty Waters, from the Overflowing of the *Loir*, and other Rivers by exceſſive Rains, which has drowned and depopulated ſome of the richeſt, the pleaſanteſt, and moſt fruitful Part of all his Country—And what has the King of *France* to ſay to this? —Immediately he appoints publick Prayers, Confeſſions and Humiliations over all the Country, to deprecate the Wrath of Heaven, and ſeek Mercy to the Nation. Oh, go to the *French*, ye Proteſtants! Go to the *French*!

And now, Gentlemen, what ſhall we ſay to this Method of the *French*? Will ye ſatisfie your ſelves with ſaying they are Papiſts and Idolaters, and ſo in the Languge of the blind Man to the High Prieſts, *We know that GOD heareth not Sinners*, Luke 9. *John* 3? Will this put off the Sence of the Matter from you, and make you eaſie about it—*Go back then* to the Citizens of *Nineveh*, who were as great Sinners as the Citizens of *Paris*, nay almoſt as great as the Citizens of *London*—And yet GOD heard them—The Caſe is plain, and you need not go to your Caſuiſts to expound it——GOD may hear a Nation ſo as to adjourn their Deſtruction, whom he does not hear ſo as to deliver them; He may hear a People ſo as to deliver them from the immediate Judgment they deprecate, whom he may not hear ſavingly, as to Heaven and their Souls; and I need but ſend you to your Bibles for Inſtances of this, which are ſo many, I may ſpare quoting them.

As for Me, I make this ſhort Uſe of it, which I draw from the Poſture of our preſent Affairs, and which I recommend to your ſerious Thoughts, *Viz.* Have a Care, Gentlemen, ſuch is the State of *Europe* at this Time, that if GOD ſhould be pleas'd to deferr their Deſtruction, I do not ſee it poſſible, he ſhould deferr ours

Go to the *French*, then ye Proteſtants! That have Victories *without Thankſgiving*, and Loſſes *without Humiliation*; that neither *praiſe GOD* for his Mercies, nor *pray to him* under his Judgments; that think the *French* ſhall not be heard, *becauſe they are Papiſts*, and yet ſay nothing to be heard your ſelves, tho' *you ſay you are Proteſtants*; learn of them to pray every Man to his GOD, as the Men of *Tarſhiſh* did in the Ship, when they were in a Storm.

Nor is Our Preſence of their Idolatry or falſe Worſhip any Objection here; if they call upon a falſe GOD, if you find Fault with them for their Worſhip do you mend it, and call upon the True; either you are miſtaken, or you will be apt enough to think your Prayers better than theirs, and *I hope*, they are better directed; but I am not ſpeaking of the Difference, but of the thing in general, and the Neceſſity on either Hand; and this brings me to enquire, whether the Exhortation and the Occaſion ſuit or no, whether there be Ground for the Argument or no.

To them that would leſſen the Occaſion, I have little to ſay but this; Is not the Ship in a Storm, or at leaſt got in among the Rocks? Has not the direct immediate Hand of Providence appear'd viſibly againſt us in ſeveral Particulars, and it is not with infinite Difficulties, that a wiſe Government ſteers among ſo many Dangers, by ſo many Rocks, and with ſo many Enemies? Is it not plain, that nothing but the Wonders of Providence have kept us a-float, and ſtruck our Enemies with Trembling? And if that Soveraign Conduct ſeems for a Time to leave us, and give our Enemies new Courage, Is not this the Time to look up? Is not this the Time to be *Ninevites*? For Shame go learn of the *French*!

But I am told, that to proclaim Faſts, and general Humiliation as a publick Act, would be diſcouraging, and look like a deſpairing of our Caſe: Unchriſtian and indeed prophane is that Suggeſtion!—*Why* will ye pray without Hope? Certainly, if *Britain* was once a truly

truly humbled and reformed Nation, she would be a fighting Nation, and I doubt not, would be a victorious Nation too; the Argument is strong the other way, it would be so far from a Discouragement, that I must own to you, I shall never expect to see us a conquering, victorious, successful People, till we are a praying, humbled, reforming People; we cannot be prosperous without it: And call this canting or preaching, or what you please, there have been such Instances of it in the World, that I cannot want enough to illustrate it, but I'll give you one, that I believe, you will little expect from me.

In the late civil Wars here, it was manifest, to avoid more particular Comparisons, that the King's Army and the Parliaments Army differ'd exceedingly in this; that the Kings Army gave themselves a Loose to all Manner of Prophaneness, Vice and ungoverned Debauchery, and the Parliament Soldiers were kept sober, strict and reform'd: The King, whose Morals were ill enough, and gave Encouragement enough by his Example, saw the Difference himself, and was so sensible of it, tho' not in his Power to remedy it, having no Power to execute an exact Discipline upon a Volunteer Army; that he express'd himself with a just Concern at it, after one of the Battles he had fought, when pressing his Generals to a better Discipline, he told some of them, he foresaw, that GOD did not bless them for the intollerable Wickedness of their Soldiers: I mention this, not only to the Honour of the King's Personal Sobriety, but as to the present Case, it is to the Purpose; the Reformation in the Discipline of the other Forces made them fight with more Boldness, and consequently with a surer Success, and so it would in ours; and here I must digress a little.

If we were to look into our Armies and Camps, but especially into our Fleet, I must own to you, it is a Wonder to me, Heaven should suffer Winds to blow for them, or Ships to swim under them, or Shot to fly for them; that he is not mov'd by the horrid Oaths, Cursings, Ravings, and Blasphemings on Board our Ships, to discharge Nature from obeying her Course with them; that their Damnings and Madness do not stagnate the Sea, and raise Convulsions in the very Elements; that every Breath of Wind is not a Tempest, and that the Waves do not fly back in a Fright, and leave them sprawling on the Bottom; to hear poor ignorant, blinded, intollerable Monsters insulting the Power that made them, and tho' within 6 Inches of Death every Moment, dare GOD Almighty to damn them at every Word.

They tell us there was ONE, *and sad is the Story*, BUT ONE Man sav'd out of the *Rumney* Man of War, which was lost on the Rocks off of *Scilly*. Were that poor Creature but examin'd, and would he tell us faithfully, what Damning, what Swearing, what Raging, Curling, and Excesses was he Witness to in that Ship, within a Quarter of an Hour before they knew their Danger; *or say, we were to take the whole Day before*—— Could a Man print now a lively Description of it, according to the unhappy Usage on Board the rest, *for I do not say, that Ship was worse than another*; Could this be represented in lively Colours to the Imagination, and then I entreat you, do but fancie you were in View, when in one Moment that hellish Crew were at one Stroke dash'd into Eternity—That Death gave but one Knock at the Door, and made all the Bars of Life fly open at once, and in the two Ships at least a thousand of these Miserables went quick down into the Pit, with hardly Time to cast a Thought towards him that made them, or cry to him for Mercy.

Let any Man, that knows what Sort of People (generally speaking) our Men of War are fill'd with, think upon this without Horror; *if he can*, he must be a better Christian or a worse than I; it makes a Man's Soul shrink back, and leaves Nature in a Kind of Chill to think of it.

How to remedy this Evil, I confess, is difficult, and how to think GOD should prosper us till it be remedy'd, I know not neither; Her Majesty has express'd a just Concern at this, and I am satisfy'd, would do all that lay in her Power to remedy it—I'll tell you, Gentlemen of the Armies and Navies, two Ways to have this remedy'd; One is, That the Commanders, Captains and Officers should remedy it, and that must be first by their own Example; and secondly, by strict and exact Discipline; but principally by Example, which would be a happy Beginning.

If you do not think fit to do it this Way, the other is, what I doubt ye are more inclin'd